3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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equaled the demand for them; in 1791 the census listed half a million then living, but no writer seems to have even a vague idea of how many millions were imported during the sixty years of the colony's heyday.

Production, particularly of sugar and coffee, steadily increased until the tiny colony ranked among the wealthiest regions of the world. The Spanish Indies were declining, so that Saint-Domingue alone far outranked them all combined between 1766 and 1791. Splendid roads were built, extensive irrigation projects developed, and stately mansions erected. Life moved along with ceremony and display—for the planters; attended by their black lackeys, the white French masters entertained royally or were driven like lords in their coaches to make formal visits to neighbors. Many of these well-to-do colonials spent half their time in Paris, ostentatiously spending their riches. To be "wealthy as a Creole" came to be a common expression in France.[1] Perhaps nowhere in the Americas was existence at once so delightful and so ornamental as it was for the wealthy planters among the 36,000 whites of Saint-Domingue in 1791.

For the mother country, too, this small bit of tropical land was profitable during the latter days of Bourbon royalty. Neither Martinique nor Guadeloupe could compare with it in value. In 1789 nearly two thirds of the foreign commercial interests of France centred in Saint-Domingue; its combined exports and imports were valued at more than $140,000,000; its sugar, coffee, indigo, and cotton supplied the home market and employed in prosperous years more than 700 ocean-going vessels, with as many as 80,000 seamen.[2]

Where wealth exists, social distinctions generally develop. In Saint-Domingue the evolving class system produced such discord that sparks from the French Revolution eventually set off an explosion in the colony. Casual surveys of Haitian history generally record that in 1791 the slaves revolted, and that out of this insurrection grew the war of independence. This is true; but it was not the resentment of slaves against their masters which caused the final explosion; the slaves were tinder used by others to keep the conflagration burning. Negro slaves, of course, did not figure in the "class" system; they were below the classes of colonial society. The class system, properly

1. The word "creole" means only "colonial born"; there is no connotation of race mixture in the term.

2. Pamphile de Lacroix, *Mémoires*, II, 277.

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A revolution directed by a general of real ambition was likely to involve an appeal to foreign powers. Haiti being almost roadless, ships were important for moving troops and blockading seaports. Many a chieftain has purchased six or eight ships abroad, and with this "navy" won his fight. Financial intrigue was frequent. By borrowing money from France, Germany, or England, with the promise to reshape Haitian financial policy to the benefit of the creditor country, several revolutionaries have secured funds for arms and the necessary soldiers to effect a coup. Sooner or later also one might expect to see the Môle Saint Nicolas, which guards the Windward Passage pathway between Cuba and Haiti, come into the picture. Cession of the Mole has frequently been held out as bait for foreign support, but popular opposition to white ownership of any Haitian land has always stopped actual cession. When Haiti's debt to Germany was due, she borrowed from France to pay it, and then later borrowed from the United States to pay France. All such appeals to foreign powers have merely drawn attention to the defenseless position of the country; many a successful revolutionary chief has lived to regret his appeal for aid.[19]

The one time between 1804 and 1915 when political opinion was vocal and truly significant was in the latter years of Boyer's administration. Then it took pains to attack specific evils with steady persistence, even though the cures suggested were vague. Yet after the successful elimination of Boyer, politicians who had worked so brilliantly in the opposition showed themselves even more incapable. Political thought, at a low ebb for the next forty years, revived only when, after 1883, the Liberals were eliminated from politics. Their complete defeat seems to have given élite thinkers time for sober reflection upon the plight of their country. Before 1843 the critics had been in a position to make their words effective; after 1883 they wrote—soberly, brilliantly, persuasively—but their books and pamphlets were read only by a small group of fellow aristocrats who already thought as they did, or disagreed with them in print. Political homilies made no impression upon the minds of the peasants left uneducated by all the élite presidents of Haiti.

In the crucial days of the American Occupation, once again political debate rose to brilliant heights. The rude shock of seeing foreign

19. See, on this whole subject of Haiti's foreign relations, an excellent chapter in Montague, *op. cit.*, chap. IX.